

A Report on the 2006 Legislative Session

To my constituents of the 17th Legislative District

Representative Jim Dunn, R-Vancouver



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JIM DUNN**

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Dear Neighbors,

Our 2006 legislative session is now in the books. This 60-day session, which ended a day early, saw some good bills move forward. Unfortunately, it also saw some measures pass that I believe will take our state backwards in areas.

We made good progress this year in stronger sentences for sex offenders, helping students, breaking down barriers to adoption, and repealing state park fees.

We also saw unprecedented state spending and a continued disregard for our employers, health care system and part-time higher education faculty. I will touch on some of these issues in this newsletter.

My priorities as your state representative continue to be **creating jobs**; increasing availability of **affordable housing**, **strengthening public education**, and **holding government accountable**.

I believe it is **important to stay in touch with you**. Unfortunately, this will be the last newsletter I will be able to send you in 2006 due to election-year restrictions. I am allowed to respond should you contact me about anything. Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

I enjoy being **your state representative** – it is an **honor** and **privilege to serve you**

Respectfully,

Jim Dunn
State Representative, 17th District



HOUSE COMMITTEES:

Children & Family Services

Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade

Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade Work Group

Higher Education

Housing

Assistant Ranking Republican

**GROUPS, COUNCILS
AND OTHER
COMMITTEES:**

Washington State:

Family Policy Council

Lewis & Clark Bicentennial
Advisory Committee

Tourism Advisory Committee

Tourism Marketing Advisory
Committee

**American Legislative Exchange
Council – Washington, D.C.**

Education Task Force

Commerce, Insurance &
Economic Development
Task Force

**National Conference of State
Legislatures – Denver, Colorado**

Caucus of Native American
Legislators

Representative Jim Dunn

DISTRICT 17

Keeping our neighborhoods safe from sex offenders

We all want to feel safe in the neighborhoods we live in. However, certain types of people prevent us from feeling safe all the time.

This year we took a step in the right direction when it comes to punishing sex offenders. **House Bill 3277** imposes **25-year sentences** for **sexual offenses against children** younger than 15, **developmentally disabled people** and **vulnerable adults**.

While this new law is better than what we had on the books, **I have concerns with how it treats offenders who commit the aforementioned crimes against family members**. These related offenders are, in most instances, eligible for dramatically reduced sentences.

I continue to believe the **people who commit these heinous crimes – regardless of affiliation with their victims – should be treated equally under the law**. I will continue to work to this end.

I also supported successful measures that:

- **Boost penalties for child pornography;**
- **Require electronic monitoring of certain sex offenders;** and
- **Prohibit sex offenders from living within two blocks of schools.**

Helping our students prepare for their futures

K-12 public education

When I talk to constituents, I hear over and over that **we must keep our academic standards and support students in achieving them**. While people have **concerns about the WASL**, they do not want to abandon our **academic standards**. I agree with these sentiments.

This legislative session saw an acknowledgment by legislators that **some students need extra help passing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)** and others need **technical and career alternatives**. As a result, the following measures were passed:

- **\$20.2 million for additional instruction** for those in the class of 2008 who did not pass portions of the WASL;
- **Diagnostic testing for students** to find and address their learning gaps;
- **Creation of a student-centered planning program;**
- **Reviewing viable options for equally rigorous career and technical education alternatives;** and
- **Studying why students struggle** on parts of the WASL.



Local schools that visited Olympia this year

Speaking of the future of our state, **I was fortunate to be able to host the following schools at the Legislature** this year. Each group was fun, unique and provided me a breath of fresh air when getting to meet and speak with them.

- Evergreen High School
- Heritage High School
- Pleasant Valley Middle School
- Hearthwood Elementary School
- Riverview Elementary School
- Pleasant Valley Primary School
- Washington State University (Vancouver)
- Clark College
- Vancouver and Battle Ground foreign exchange students

Breaking down barriers to adoption

We need to make sure **adoptions of children** are **handled efficiently and equitably** with the rights of all parties protected.

I sponsored legislation this year aimed at **eliminating barriers** that exist when **trying to adopt a child**. This measure – **House Bill 2468** – stalled in the House, but its companion – **Senate Bill 6635** – passed and was signed into law by the governor.

The measure establishes a fund to **assist prospective adoptive parents** in meeting the costs of adopting a child and ensures no adoptions will ever be delayed, denied or given preferential treatment based upon the race of the child or prospective adoptive parents.

These **concepts** and **protections** are **important** – and **necessary**. I am proud to be associated with this legislation as I think it is in the best interests of families and children.

2006 Legislative Session

Our state spending and the need for "Truth in Budgeting"

The following is an opinion-editorial I wrote on our state budgeting process, your tax dollars and the need for "Truth in Budgeting." I think it really captures where we are as a state right now – a position you might agree warrants concern.



We all work hard to provide for ourselves and families. With this comes an understanding government must use part of our earnings to pay for essential public services and infrastructure.

As your state representative, I play a role in deciding how state tax dollars are used. What I have seen in my time in the Washington State Legislature with our budgeting process is alarming.

A concerned group of organizations agreed with me and others about the state budgeting games being played and successfully argued in court that Democrat budget-writers hid under a false appearance and exploited a loophole in I-601.

I-601 was put in place by voters in 1993 to limit the growth of state government. Since its passage, I-601 has been amended by the Legislature so many times it no longer works as a check on government growth.

As a result, state spending has increased by over 17 percent since our last budget. That equates to \$4.4 billion in new spending in just two years – at the expense of taxpayers and employers across our state.

This year saw factions within the majority party – which controls the state budgeting process – shut out the public and media in their decision-making processes. This is not how it used to be when Republicans were leading the process, as we made conference committees open to the public and media, and respected the rights of the minority.

There are too many decisions being made in Olympia out of the public's view. We need more transparency and scrutiny of state government if the public is truly going to have confidence in their elected officials and democratic processes.

I have a proposed solution called "Truth in Budgeting" and it is part of Republicans' Commitment to Washington:

- A "Sunshine Law" that would require a seven-day period from the time a budget is proposed to the time it can be passed out of the chamber of origin;
- Constitutional spending limits;
- A secure reserve fund to ensure savings for a "rainy day";
- A constitutional 60 percent vote requirement to raise taxes to ensure bipartisan approval; and
- Making budgets more understandable to the media and public.

Addressing our health care crisis with the help of employers

Our employers still face too many state regulations and an **unfriendly business climate**. This scenario has caused many to close their businesses, reduce their work force or cut benefits such as health care insurance.

We had a great opportunity this legislative session to assist our employers – especially in the area of **health insurance for their employees. House Bill 2572, after being amended by the Senate, offered hope for employers.** But as it came back to the House, these **amendments were rejected by the majority party.**

I supported the following amendments because they would have made the measure good for our employers and addressed, in part, our health care insurance problem. I will continue to support these concepts in the future:

- Offering a **business and occupation tax credit** for small employers who provide health care for their employees;
- **Eliminating the requirement** that subsidized health benefit plans must be equivalent to the costly Basic Health Plan; and
- Offering **less expensive, mandate-free health care plans.**



Supporting the semiconductor industry, economy in Clark County

I supported a very important measure for our district this year that will provide **tax incentives to the semiconductor cluster** in Washington.

House Bill 3190 will help **Clark County maintain and create good paying, local jobs, and ensure the state stays competitive** in the future economy. In essence, the legislation helps connect our important semiconductor industry to those in the private sector who invest in the industry.



Rep. Dunn with legislative page Madalyn Vonhoff of Mountain View High School in Vancouver

Eliminating parking fees in state parks

Many of you will be pleased to know that **you will no longer have to pay a \$5 parking fee when you visit our state's beautiful state parks.** This fee was eliminated this legislative session and it was the right thing to do for the individuals and families who enjoy our state parks each year.



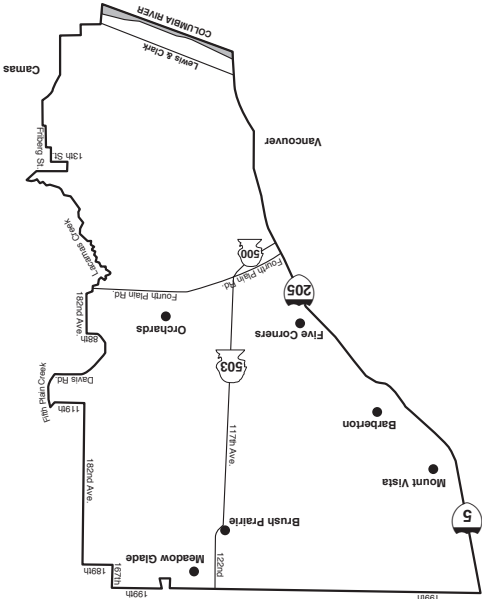
Resources on the Internet

If you need information about state government, you may find the following Internet sites to be great resources. Or you can always call, write or e-mail my office.

hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/dunn.htm – offers my views and news releases on various issues.

access.wa.gov – provides access to state agency services, including applying for unemployment benefits, renewing car tabs and much more.

leg.wa.gov – offers committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you would want to know about the Legislature.



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